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### CAUSES OF THE NEGLECT OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN RHODE-ISLAND.

[Having called the attention of our readers to the absence in Judge Durfee's review of the civil polity of Rhode Island, of the element of public schools, we very readily give place to the following article, which appeared originally in the Rhode Island Temperance Pledge. The signature and the style would indicate its author to be an associate of Judge Durfee on the bench of the Supreme Court.]

"Too much honor cannot be given to the first settlers of New England generally, for their early attention to the cause of public education. The governments of Plymouth, in Massachusetts, and Hartford and New Haven, very soon after their establishment, assumed the education of children as one of the legitimate objects of their care. Every village was obliged to maintain its school, and the whole mass, by voluntary offerings and contributions, aided in the endowment of the higher literary institutions. All these were considered as auxiliaries to the Church. The immediate oversight and general charge of them, was in the hands of the clergy. Their talents and acquirements entitled them to the preference, and the influence which they exerted over every part of the community, insured it to them.

The principal object of the settlers of these colonies, was to enjoy a purer form of worship than the laws of their land tolerated. They, doubtless, thought they had attained it. They endeavored to sustain its purity by the power of the civil magistrate. Far from relying on influence and authority which lives spent in accordance with their professions, would exercise on

those who differed from them, they pursued the easier beaten track, and reformed the schismatic by threats, or cut him off with the sword of the magistrate. Pursuing this mode of preserving purity in religion by legal enactment and corporeal punishment, every step that the child took in its learning was made to have a tendency to secure uniformity in doctrine and practice. The community required this, and the guardians of the institutions were quite willing to enforce it. Science, which should ever be the handmaid of religion, in these establishments was degraded to the bond-slave of sectarianism. The parish Church and the district school, instead of being allies, were united in unholy wedlock. The latter was made and was designed to be merely the nursery of the other. The great design of the higher literary institutions was to fit men for the ministry. All learning which would not subserve this purpose was lightly esteemed.

It is not intended by these remarks to censure the men, who, for this object, and in this manner, favored public education.— With their views of religion, with their opinions of the purity of the Church establishment, they could not consistently have acted differently. Believing that the safety, nay, the very existence of their Commonwealth, depended upon an exact uniformity in religious belief, as good patriots, they could not have done less than they did. And believing that their peculiar doctrines and ceremonies were identified with those received in the primitive Church, and were not merely the only true ones, but the only safe ones for mankind to adopt, as Christians they were bound to urge the adoption of them by all men. That they erred in the means pursued, it is presumed, will not at this day be denied, and it is from this error, that it is intended to find palliation for the neglect of education in Rhode-Island.

The first settlers of this State had felt, in their estates and persons, the evils resulting to conscientious men from laws requiring uniformity in religious opinions. Preferring to obey God rather than man, to sacrifice present comfort, for a good conscience, they had removed beyond the jurisdiction of the other colonies. Smarting under the penal laws of these governments, they sought to establish one which should punish, not for opinions merely, but for those acts, which disturb the public peace, without any regard to the origin of those acts. Strict Independents in their views of Church government, they aimed to avoid every approach towards either Episcopacy or Presbyterianism. Most of them, soon after the settlement, if not at the very first, believed that a Christian Church consisted of adult profess-

ors, wherever residing; such as from the convictions of truth and their own expressed consent, united themselves together. They repudiated the idea of a parish Church, extending to certain territorial limits, and embracing all persons residing within them. They had seen the district school, from an ally of true religion, made the bond slave of the Parish Church; and denying the latter, by a course equally erroneous with that pursued by the neighboring governments, they neglected to foster and encourage the former. They had been taught to believe, or at least, induced to fear, that the one was dependent on the other. The fruit being evil, they condemned the tree, without stopping to ascertain, what, in reality was the fact, that the fruit was corrupted after it fell from the tree.

With regard to the higher institutions of learning, they had been made equally obnoxious to them. They regarded them as fountains of error, as schools where only a false philosophy was taught. They had heard them mostly extolled as furnishing the means of education, necessary for the minister of the Gospel. Both in Old England and in New, they had experienced no gentle treatment, from the hands of an educated priesthood. It was but a short step for men exasperated as they were, to believe that that which had been held out as useful, was in itself absolutely necessary, to constitute a minister, and that human learning made the kind of ministers with which they had to deal. They overlooked the distinction between the right use and the abuse of learning, and for its abuse, neglected its cultivation. It surely may be permitted their descendants to palliate their errors, to set forth the reasons which must have influenced them. In avoiding one extreme they had felt to be injurious, they have left their posterity great cause to lament that they fell into the other.

The prejudice against learning, was too deeply seated to be easily or speedily removed. It was in fact rather increased by the influx of the early Quakers into the colony. This was their city of refuge. Many of their early testimonies were directed against the priesthood of the day, and many severe things were said and written by them on this subject, with truth. This, no doubt, revived the slumbering prejudices of the first settlers, and kept alive their resentment against a learned clergy. The persecuting spirit which they possessed, was, by a kind of false reasoning, attributed to their learning. Early Quakers also decried human learning as tending to call off the mind from what should be the highest object of its attention and regard. More recently

this sect has adopted a more correct view of the matter ; distinguishing between the use and the abuse of learning.

The early Baptists promulgated the same erroneous opinions, but they retraced their steps at an earlier period. These two sects made up a large majority of the Colony, and to their united influence must be mainly attributed the want of an establishment of Public Schools by law.

Another peculiarity in the situation of Rhode Island should also be borne in mind. Under the first Charter, the Colony was little more than a confederation of independent States. The second Charter united them more firmly, but still the early independence of the several towns is not entirely lost sight of. Under neither of these Charters, did the colonial government acquire title to any land. What was vested before the grant of any Charter, in the separate settlements embraced in the Confederation. They resembled the corporations and companies of the present day, associated for pecuniary purposes ; present personal safety and perhaps ultimate pecuniary gain, being their chief objects. From such associations it would be in vain to look for much encouragement to learning. The colony by purchase of the natives, did, at one time possess some tracts of land in the Narragansett country. They would by no means compare with those vast tracts from the sale of which other States have, in a great measure, raised their School funds. But even these tracts they were compelled to dispose of not long after the purchase, to such individuals as would defend their right to the jurisdiction over them, against the pretensions of neighboring Colonies. It was a kind of forced sale, yielding little to the public treasury. So far from receiving from this, or any other source, the means of supporting public schools, almost all the expenses of government from its establishment, have been raised by dry taxation on the inhabitants. How this circumstance would have affected the zeal of her neighbors in the cause of education, can only be surmised.

Again, the Colony of Rhode-Island had a great and important duty to discharge. To them, seems to have been intrusted by Heaven, the cause of God. They were the standard bearer in the glorious cause of religious liberty. They were called to be a distinct and separate people. With this duty upon them, they could not coalesce with the neighboring colonies. They could not rely on them for aid and assistance. Their seal and their motto, is descriptive of their situation. In whom but in God, could they hope ? Standing thus alone and for such a high pur-



pose, they had greater difficulties to overcome than the other Colonies, and they had to meet every difficulty and expense, single handed. The consequence was, that the expenditures of the Colony, drawn, as we have before stated, from dry taxation, far exceeded those of any other colony, in proportion to extent and population. The means of supporting schools were thus diminished, and the great and main object of their settlement engrossed their attention. To maintain and secure that, required constant and unremitting attention.

These, it is suggested, are some of the causes why the soil of Rhode-Island, has never seemed peculiarly favorable to schools and institutions of learning. In view of them, we should not deny, but glory in the fact. If the spirit of learning has not so much prevailed, the spirit of Christianity has more—if we have not been the most educated, we have been the most free.

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#### ORIGIN AND REPEAL OF THE SCHOOL ACT OF 1800.

The following account of the origination and repeal of the first school act of this State, is taken from a communication by John Howland, Esq., to the *Providence Daily Journal* of June 10, 1842.

The subject of public schools was agitated and discussed among the members of the Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers in the year 1798; and at their quarterly meeting on the second Monday in January, 1799, it was determined to present a memorial to the General Assembly, requesting them to pass an act to make the legal provisions for the establishment of public schools sufficient to educate *all the children in the several towns throughout the State*. Here it will be necessary to mention, that the members of the Association, or any other persons, never doubted the power or right of any town to establish public schools and to defray the expenses by a town tax; but the purpose of addressing the Legislature was to call them to a sense of their duty in favoring the cause of instruction, either by assessing some penalty, or granting some special privilege to those towns that should adopt the system. So far as the town of Providence was concerned, we should have established public schools here, if the General Assembly had declined acting on the subject. We wanted no law of the State to grant us any power. We knew we already possessed sufficient, and when the subject had been spread before the community in the public paper, by several members of the society, and others who were induced to write in its favor, our whole population, with but few exceptions, were in favor of the measure. And, in this connection, all due credit ought to be given to most of those gentlemen who possessed the largest property, and who would be held to contribute most to the expense, for their exertions in its favor. Mr. John Brown and Mr. John Innes Clarke, who paid the largest taxes, were zealous in the cause.

The memorial and petition of the Association was favorably received, and the Attorney General (Burrill) was appointed to present a bill at the next session. The bill was drawn in Mr. Burrill's office, in this city, where two members of the society, by invitation of Mr. Burrill, were present in consultation. Mr. George Burrill was the scribe. The bill was presented at the next session, and referred

to the several towns for them to instruct their Representatives respecting its passing into a law. Most of the towns paid no attention to it by way of instructions; other towns instructed their members to advocate its passage. Mr. Mowry, an able Representative from Smithfield, strongly advocated its adoption in a well written speech, which was published in the Gazette. The bill passed in the lower House, but was laid over in the Senate. The election was approaching in which Lieut. Gov. Potter and two other members of the Senate lost their elections. The new Lieut. Governor and two Senators, in favor of the bill, took their places. At the next session holden in Providence, Mr. Joel Metcalf and the subscriber went to the Senate Chamber to request the school bill to be called up. Mr. John I. Clarke, the Senator from Providence, arose from his seat and came to us. We stated to him the purpose of our coming, and he assured us that he would call up the bill at the commencement of the afternoon session. When the afternoon session had been some little time convened, Mr. Metcalf and myself entered the Senate room, and Mr. Clarke immediately came to us and said the school bill had just passed. "Was there any opposition?" "No. Not a word said." We retired, to tell the pleasing result. After the act had been in force nearly a year and a half, and when Smithfield, North Providence, West Greenwich, and other towns were taking the proper measures in accordance with it, the act was suddenly, and without time for debate, repealed. The repeal of the act of the State had no effect on the school system in Providence. That existed, and has received the increasing support and patronage of our citizens to the present time.

#### CONDITION OF EDUCATION IN RHODE-ISLAND IN 1828.

The following summary of the state of Education in Rhode-Island in 1828, is taken from the *Rhode-Island American and Gazette* of January 16, 1828.

"Schools are now kept up in our country towns at a very considerable expense to the people; an expense much greater than would be required of them should they raise an equal amount with the sum they would be entitled to receive from the treasury, under the proposed act for establishing free schools. To shew this, we refer to the following statement, gathered from the representatives of the towns named, the general correctness of which may be relied on, though the statement is not as full as could be wished. In 1821, a committee appointed on the state of education, collected from most of the towns the exact account of the number of school-houses, schools, &c., in each town. Their report was never made to the legislature, and the information is not to be found on file. In order to supply this defect, as far as possible, we have applied to the several representatives, and now give the result, with the exception of Providence, which is abundantly provided with schools.

**Newport.**—One free school, with about 200 scholars: 42 private schools, having about 1100 scholars. These schools are supported winter and summer. Inhabitants, 7,319.

**West Greenwich.**—Two school-houses, built by subscription. Eleven schools are regularly kept about three months in the winter; three of which are continued nearly the year round. Inhabitants, 1927.

**Richmond.**—Two school houses, in which schools are kept a part of each season—also a well attended Sunday school. Inhabitants, 1423.

**Hopkinton.**—Nine school houses, in three of which—in the vicinity of factories—schools are kept through the year—the others in the winter. Inhab. 1821.

**North Kingstown.**—The Elam Academy, and one private school in Wickford.—There is but one school house in the town, near Wm. Reynold's factory—in all six schools, three of which are kept winter and summer. Inhab. 3,007.

**Exeter.**—Three school houses in which winter schools are kept—no other schools in the town. Inhab. 2,581.

**East Greenwich.**—Academy, and one private school house in the village, kept year round: four in other parts of the town—in all, six school houses. Seven

schools are kept in the winter, and three or four women's schools in the summer. Inhab. 1,519.

*Johnston*.—Five school houses: six or seven schools are kept in the winter, and two or three in the summer. Inhab. 1,542.

*Charlestown*.—One school house: from five to seven schools in the winter, and three in the summer. Inhab. 1,160.

*Coventry*.—Ten school houses: fourteen schools in winter, and seven in summer. Inhab. 3,139.

*Portsmouth*.—Four school houses, in which schools are kept pretty regularly in winter, and in one or two in summer. Inhab. 1,645.

*Foster*.—Fifteen school houses—all open in the winter season, and most of them in summer. Inhab. 2,000.

*North Providence*.—Seven school houses—an academy, and four other schools in Pawtucket, two men's and three women's, kept most of the year—in all, eleven schools in the town, most of them kept open but a part of the year. Inhab. 2,420.

*Cranston*.—Is divided into eleven districts, and has eleven school houses, though schools are not regularly kept in all. There are five other schools—in all, sixteen schools, but a small part kept through the year. Inhab. 2,274.

*Middletown*.—Five school houses, in which are schools regularly in winter, and irregularly in summer. Inhab. 949.

*Warwick*.—Seven school houses, in which are kept men's schools, besides two or three others: six women's schools in winter and summer—in all, sixteen schools. Inhab. 3,643.

*Smithfield*.—Has thirteen school houses. Two of these are well conducted academies, kept the year round, at Woonsocket and Slatersville, two flourishing manufacturing villages. There is also a private school at Woonsocket. Two school houses on the east road, four on the Worcester road—one Sayles' hill—one in Angell's neighborhood—one, Louisquisset turnpike, of brick, and one near R. Mowry. Besides schools regularly kept in these places, there are five others—in all nineteen schools. Inhab. 4,678.

*Cumberland*.—Is divided into districts, and has thirteen school houses—schools regularly kept and well attended in all. Inhab. 2,653.

*Burrillville*.—Eleven school houses—schools in all in the winter, averaging forty scholars each—one kept the year round. There are four or five private schools in summer. Inhab. 2,164.

*Situate*.—Five school houses. There are probably some sother chools in the town; but a correct statement could not be obtained. Inhab. 2,834.

*Glocester*.—Eleven school houses, and about fifteen schools in the town in winter. Inhab. 2,504.

*Jamestown*.—Three school houses, schools kept in but two in winter. Inhab. 448.

*Barrington*.—Three school houses—schools kept winter and summer. Inhab. 634.

*Little Compton*.—Eight school houses open in winter, and most all in summer. Inhab. 1,580.

*Westerly*.—Six school houses open the year round, limited to thirty scholars each. There are two academies, one at Pawcatuck, a manufacturing village, kept the year round—in all, eight schools. Inhab. 1,972.

*Bristol*.—Four school houses, one of which is an academy, with two schools in it. There are five men's schools in winter, and seven women's schools through the year. The town appropriates about \$350 annually for support of schools, arising from the rent of market, licences, and some land given for that purpose. Inhab. 3,197.

*Warren*.—One academy and four school houses—three built by the town, and one by an individual. There are five men's schools in winter, (including the academy,) and an average of twelve female schools through the year, in addition to the above—sometimes as many as twenty female schools. Inhab. 1,806.

*New Shoreham*.—One school house. There are four schools, averaging thirty scholars each, kept four months in winter, and about six months in summer. Inhab. 955.

*South Kingstown*.—One academy, in which a school is kept the year round, and

seven school houses, in which schools are kept winter and summer. There a number of schools kept irregularly in private houses. Inhab. 3,723.

*Tiverton*.—Ten school houses, in which schools are kept pretty regularly. There are a few other small schools. Inhab. 2,875.

*Providence*.—There are eight public schools in this town, at which about nine hundred children are taught. Six or seven academies, where the higher branches are taught, including the Friends' Seminary, and probably eighty or ninety private schools. In 1821 a regular return was made of all the schools in town. Exclusive of the public schools, there were then ten men's schools, and forty-four kept by females. Since then this number has greatly increased. The expense of the public schools paid by tax on the inhabitants, is not much short of \$5,000. The amount paid by parents for private tuition is doubtless double that sum, making at the lowest estimate \$15,000, annually paid for the tuition of the children of Providence. It is obvious therefore, that in a pecuniary point of view, Providence will gain nothing by the system of free schools becoming general, as she would pay much more into the treasury, toward the support of schools in other towns, than she would be entitled to draw out, besides making up the deficiency in the support of her own schools. Inhabitants in 1820, 11,767. Since increased to upwards of 17,000.

Population of the counties in 1820, Providence 35,736 Newport 15,771. Washington 15,687. Kent 10,228. Bristol 5,637.

Supposed number of children necessary to be educated, viz, Providence county 15,315. Newport 6,527. Washington 7,093. Kent 4,547. Bristol 2,361. In the State 35,843 children.

From an examination of the above statement, it will be seen that there is a much larger number of school houses erected than has been generally supposed, and but few additional ones will be required. It is obvious too, that the expense to all the towns of keeping up the schools they now maintain, is a much greater sum than they will be required to assess in order to entitle them to their proportion of any money that may be appropriated out of the Treasury; thus giving them, at a less expense than the inhabitants of those towns now voluntarily incur nearly double the advantages of education they are now receiving.

The total number of school houses erected in all the towns in the State, (excluding Providence and Newport) are 181, and 10 academies. The number of winter schools, averaging at least three months in a year, maintained by the inhabitants of those towns, is 262. A winter school for three months, must cost at least \$100, which gives \$26,200, the sum now annually paid by the inhabitants of the towns above alluded to, for the education of their children, besides the expenses of keeping female schools in summer. If the blank in the bill now before the General Assembly is filled with \$10,000, the proportion which those towns will receive from that sum will so much diminish their expenses of education; or if they add it to what they now pay within themselves, will greatly extend the means of instruction among their children, without one cent additional burden, the only effect being to equalize the payment of the sums now voluntarily raised in the several towns.

Taking the estimate for the criterion of apportionment, the several towns would be entitled to receive the following sums out of an annual allowance from the Treasury of \$10,000, viz.; Newport, 609,40. Portsmouth 245,08. New Shoreham, 37,32. Jamestown 107,22. Middletown 137,86. Tiverton 175,36. Little Compton 153,18. Providence 2,910 54. Smithfield 551,46. Scituate 291,04. Gloucester 208,32. Cumberland 266,48. Cranston 306,38. Johnston 196,08. North Providence 382,96. Foster 193. Burrillville 199,80. Westerly 143,98. North Kingstown, 266,54. South Kingstown 336,74. Charlestown 107,22. Exeter 183,86. Richmond 91,90. Hopkinton 143,98. Bristol 459,49. Warren 189,94. Barrington 58,60. Warwick 398,28. East Greenwich 140,74. West Greenwich 190,74. Coventry 175,22.

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## DEBATE ON THE SCHOOL ACT OF 1828.

We have recently met with a pamphlet edition of the "*Debate on the Bill establishing Free Schools at the January Session of the Rhode Island Legislature, A. D. 1828,*" reported for the *Rhode-Island American*, by B. F. Hallett. We propose to make a few extracts from this interesting debate, for the purpose of exhibiting the views of some of the public men of Rhode-Island on the subject of Free Schools twenty years ago, and preserving the history of the school system of this State. The subject was brought before the Assembly at the October Session, in 1827, by memorials from inhabitants of Smithfield, Cumberland, Johnston, East Greenwich, and other towns. The following Memorial was signed by many inhabitants of the town of East Greenwich.

*To the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, the undersigned, inhabitants of said State, respectfully represent*

That although the measures taken by individuals for the support of common schools are evidence of an increasing conviction of the benefits of early education, and deserve much praise, your Memorialists are persuaded, that the effort of public spirited men, in the different towns, would be greatly aided by the sanction of your Honorable Body, by a legislative system, extended to all parts of the State, and by occasional grants from the State Treasury, of such pecuniary encouragements as shall be consistent with prudence and expediency.

The readiness with which people associate for the purpose of building school-houses and maintaining teachers, would seem to justify an opinion that the great mass of our fellow-citizens would highly approve a judicious system of education, devised by the Legislature. It cannot be supposed that individuals, thus anxiously engaged in the promotion of a good work—individuals too, among the most respectable and worthy of their various neighborhoods, would be displeased by a legislative interference, in aid of their laudable exertions. Such an interference would probably stimulate them to new exertions and to greater liberality.

The good effects of such a general system of schools cannot be doubted. One of our largest towns has, for the last twenty-seven years, maintained free schools at an average annual expense of four or five thousand dollars. The burthen thus imposed on its ratable inhabitants has been cheerfully borne, in the persuasion, established and confirmed by experience, that the expenditure is judicious and profitable.

Nor can it be doubted that the means of extending this inestimable blessing to all parts of the State are ample, and easily obtained. The expenses of the State government are light, in comparison with those of other State governments. A judicious selection of sources of revenue, hitherto untouched in this State, would furnish the requisite means, without direct assessment on property of whatever description.

A prudent view to its own preservation would seem to inculcate on every republican State the establishment of a general system of education. The general diffusion of knowledge is one of the most effectual means of imparting security and permanency to our liberal institutions. When the people are taught that lawful magistracy proceeds from their will, and is devised for their benefit, they will have been furnished with a powerful motive for the sedulous preservation of the law which they now enjoy.

The benefits of good government consist in the efficacious operation of the laws upon every class and order of society in the State. This efficacious operation can

only be promoted and perfected by the vigilance of the people—of those by whom and for whom the government has been created. But the people cannot properly exercise this vigilance, if they are not informed, as well of their rights as of the means by which those rights should be preserved. Among an illiterate and uneducated people, the love of freedom is an irregular passion, liable to be extinguished by its own extravagances. Among a well informed people, it becomes a moral sentiment, closely allied with their religion, and exercises its salutary influence in all their thoughts and actions. That all men are equally entitled to those rights of humanity, which are essential to their existence, their personal safety and happiness, as well as to those political rights which the laws of the community secure to its individual members—that all should be protected in the acquisition and enjoyment of property, under those laws—and that an infraction or denial of any of these rights to one, is a virtual invasion of the rights of *every one*—are truths which should be instilled by early education, and assimilated with all the thoughts and habits of the freeman. This cannot be otherwise done so well as by a general system of education, extended at the public expense, to all the citizens of the State.

The most valuable part of our patrimony is the freedom of our political institutions. Let us, while transmitting that freedom to our successors, endow them, also, with the knowledge by which it may be most effectually preserved. We owe this duty to ourselves, to them, and to our common country.

This Memorial, with others, was referred to a Committee who reported, at the January Session, a bill for the establishment of Free Schools. The debate was opened by the late Joseph L. Tillinghast, Esq., then a member from Providence, and Chairman of the Committee, who spoke as follows :

Mr. Speaker—I rejoice to have lived to see the day when the question, *whether we shall make provision, by free schools, for the education of our youth*, is presented distinctly for discussion in the Legislature of this state, with a view to a present decision. A happy union of circumstances—a deep and steady flow of just opinions—sentiments cherished and fostered with patience and with hope, concurring at length with the results of prosperous industry, have brought us to this position, and placed the important decision fairly and directly in our power. I am persuaded that upon this question, in which so many wishes, so many important interests, and the welfare of so many human beings, living and hereafter to live, are involved, we have now the power to give an affirmative decision, consistently with the most scrupulous prudence, according to our consciences, and with the cordial concurrence of a great majority of the people of this state. And I sincerely hope that no misapprehension or adverse event may now arise to deprive us of that power, or refer us to a distant—perhaps a hopeless—period for exercising it.

Sir, I would not willingly believe that a single member of this House is, in his heart, opposed to the appropriation of a portion of the public revenue to so laudable and lastingly beneficent a purpose. Were we in the dominions of some absolute prince, or domineering aristocracy, we might expect opposition to the *principle* of general instruction. Of such governments it is the policy to preserve unquestioned sway over a numerical population—to enchain the mind for the purpose of perpetuating a control over the body—to mould successive generations of men into willing and liveried instruments of ambition and power. The lawgiver consults the plain dictate of self-interest in locking up the fountains of learning and truth. Even the subjects, the defrauded victims of so degrading a policy, whose spirits, in their deplorable servitude, have lost the power of estimating or resenting the fraud, and are habituated to the moral darkness in which they are condemned to grope, will often shun and *refuse* the light that would rouse them from apathy to anguish, when it revealed to them their actual, but hopeless, degradation. But we inhabit no such subdued, sad, blighted region. We represent no such shackled, and dispirited, and degenerate people. Our lot is cast in a land of free states—in a sovereignty, small, it is true, in its extent of territory, but with intellectual and physical means exceeding the proportion of its extent. A state which has taken a lead in the liberality of civil institutions—originated bright and salutary examples,

as well as followed those of others—and claiming, by no slender title, the distinguished appellation of *freest of the free*.—We are surrounded by enlightened republics, each pressing forward in the generous race of improvement, but with no more causes for emulation and ardor in that race than exist with us. Our very location, and the natural advantages which are crowded together in our limited territory, and which I need not point out to those who know, and feel, and gratefully acknowledge them—emphatically indicate that, with due encouragement, every art and every mystery which can make the materials of nature subservient to the best uses of society, may here be brought to the highest degree of excellence: and as to the *mind* which actuates our general population, (in which I include that interesting portion on which our hopes, and affections, and faith for future consolations and renovated strength, repose—the rising generation—) I believe it to be as capable of cultivation, as capable of rewarding cultivation, as rich in invention, as effective in operation, as sagacious and vigorous in applying instruction to its legitimate purposes, and improving it by the resources of native genius, as the collective mind of any people who have existed.

In such a state of things it strikes me that it is the *duty* of the lawgiver, promptly and with no further delay, than necessity requires, to make provision for general instruction. With us, the lawgiver is the people. It is the interest of the people that the civil rights and institutions, which they enjoy, should outlive the dangers to which the fluctuations and changes in society must subject them, and be perpetuated in their posterity. It is therefore the *interest*, as well as the *duty* of the lawgivers, to provide for general instruction. It is the interest of every individual and every class of the people. Not merely in their civil or collective capacity, but in every capacity, in every relation, in every pursuit, which can justly excite the attachments or the activity of a rational and immortal being amid the obligations of public or the more endearing ties of domestic life; in the rational pursuits of business or repose. To the owners and operators of every valuable species of property, its fruits must be an increased value, and improvement, and security to that property. To those who have none, it gives consolation, and usefulness, and the hope and means of acquisition. In a Republican Government, the prize is not set on high for a favored few, nor must the avenues be locked to all but the possessors of a golden key. The child of poverty and obscurity, as well as the child of wealth and honor, may aspire to the same rank, the same credit, the same sources of enjoyment; and is bound by the same general duties. He ought to be qualified to discharge those duties. The means of acquiring these enjoyments ought not to be withheld.

It has been strongly said that our constitutions do not recognize such a being as an unlettered man. Sir, every citizen has not only the right but in some instances is even bound by conscientious duty, to take some part in public affairs. One of the most simple and ordinary of political acts which a freeman is called to perform, is that of giving his suffrage. He should be qualified to perform it with intelligence; with a mind instructed in the tendency of measures, neither depressed and doubtful, nor confident and obstinate, through ignorance, nor liable, to be misled by influence and art. But, above all, he should be able to perform the act itself, by himself, without the aid, perhaps the interested aid of another. With us the very act of voting requires that he should be able to *read* his vote, and *write* his name.

The rudiments of Education are the *equipments* of the citizen; and he can no more perform the duties of self government—he can no more pass through the forms that a republican government requires of him without them, than the soldier can perform military duty without the arms and equipments which the law prescribes—and which, let me add, the law *provides* for him who has not the means of furnishing himself. Nor have the citizens of this state, sir, been insensible in time past to the importance of promoting education. It would be unjust to leave or to countenance an impression that they had been so insensible. It would be unjust to omit to correct such an impression if such at this time any where exists.—Left as this state was at the close of the war Independence, loaded with an enormous debt contracted in defence of the common country, which it had not the good fortune to procure to be funded and assumed by the United States, as other states did with theirs,—limited in territory, and, until a new spring was given to our resources, limited in means, our citizens for a long period had a hard struggle to maintain against disadvantages for which they were not in fault and

found it difficult to meet the necessary and ordinary expenses of government. But from the printed summary which we have seen at this session, exhibiting the number and state of the school houses and schools, in our several towns we cannot but derive gratifying evidence that this great object has by no means been left without attention. In various towns, especially in latter years individuals have associated themselves and devoted a zeal and bounty worthy of all praise, to the providing of schools for their respective districts and families. But this mode operates hardly and unequally upon a few, whose spirit leads them to adopt it and its benefits do not flow over the whole community, nor always reach those who most emphatically need them.

Twenty-eight years have now nearly elapsed since this General Assembly passed an act establishing Free Schools.\* That act was repealed before it had gone completely into operation. It contained some provisions, not contained in the bill now reported, which proved to be unacceptable to the people of most of the towns. But, sir, with no other obligation or guaranty than that act, the town which I have the honor to represent, (Providence,) proceeded to establish Free Schools, and by what may perhaps be called a voluntary and unanimous constitution from its citizens, has continued to maintain and augment them to this day. What is the practical lesson of *experience*, which has thus been furnished us? We live with the daily exhibition of that lesson before our eyes, and can judge. Do you believe that among the sources of the success and growth of this town (and I speak of them not for any purpose of pride, but for improvement)—do you believe that among the causes of its prosperity we may not place this early care to rescue the infant mind and give it the means of usefulness and honorable industry? Do you believe that we should now have possessed the same orderly, industrious, enterprising, intelligent, thriving population, which it is but justice to say we have, had each successive generation been left, without this care, to waste the precious hours of childhood in the streets, or, if they escaped idleness and vice, to feel the privations and mortifications of ignorance during life? Sir, among the brightest minds that have adorned their native town and carried their enterprize with its visible and salutary effects into all portions of the state, are some of those who received their first lessons in education at these primary schools.

Without appealing to the free and enlightened nations of former times, that ever recognized the provision for education as forming a paramount claim upon the legislature, we have sufficient experience of our own; and in the forms of our government it must be allowed that this claim is enforced by a superior and peculiar necessity.

But fears are entertained in consequence of the failure of the act of 1800. In the first place, that act was compulsory. It compelled every town, at its own immediate expense, by means of taxation, to build school houses, and establish and maintain schools therein; after which twenty per cent of such annual taxes, if the whole did not exceed \$6000, was to be drawn by the towns out of the General Treasury. But the most offensive section, the one which probably hastened the repeal, was that in which seven freemen in any school district were authorized to hold a district meeting, and order, assess and levy taxes in the same manner as town taxes to any amount that they should deem expedient, for schooling, independently of the general provision made by the town. This delegation of great authority to a few persons, a majority of whom might be interested in making the taxes exorbitant, occasions great uneasiness.

The present bill is free from such objections. It has no compulsory provisions or penalties. It leaves the towns the voluntary option to unite in and partake of its provisions or not. It offers and provides for them an inducement, operating from year to year, to unite and partake by provisions of their own; but if they think proper to postpone this course, it leaves them, in the mean time, precisely where they are, untaxed for the benefit of others, and at liberty to take their proportions when they choose. It goes upon the belief, justified by a knowledge of the liberality of our citizens, that no town which chooses not to make a provision for the present, will be actuated by any jealous or unsocial disposition to prevent others from doing so who may be willing. It does not defer the accomplishment of its objects and the long deferred hopes of the community to a distant and speculative period. It makes a present provision for the benefit of the children of this

\*See Journal of R. I. Institute of Instruction, vol. 1, p. 101.



our day, as well as those of future times; an immediate provision for that great good, an early education; of which every man who has fortunately received the benefits, knows how to estimate the value, and every one who has been unfortunately left destitute, feels and deeply deplores the irreparable privation. It makes that provision at a time when the state of the public treasury fully justifies it; when the sources of revenue heretofore provided have begun to be effective and productive, according to their respective character, and promise to continue so, according to every probable estimate, without diminution.

[Mr. T. then made a thorough statement of the situation of the Treasury, and showed that the amount appropriated by the bill could be calculated on, and then proceeded.]

Being then in a situation to make a present provision, let us for a moment consider the principle of the bill reported. By the first section a sum left blank, and which, upon the supposition that the rest of the bill passes, I shall propose to be \$10,000—is to be set apart from the revenue arising from lotteries and auction sales, to be paid out annually to the towns, according to their respective proportions under the last estimate of rateable property. This seems the most obvious, just, and equal ratio of distribution; and, as far as we can pursue equality, we are bound to do so. When we come to the actual application of the money to its immediate object, the idea of equality, in respect to the numbers of individuals to be benefitted by each portion, cannot be retained. An individual who has but one child, though he may be assessed at twenty dollars tax, will receive less fruits of the appropriation than he who is assessed at a dollar and has ten children. And this will apply also to the respective towns, as well as families, who may have more or less children requiring education than their respective proportions in the estimate.—Perfect equality in the *application*, therefore, is impossible. But equality in the *distribution*, according to the proportion in which the towns are bound to *contribute* to the public expenses, is attainable, and seems just. Nevertheless, I have heard suggestions from several members that the ratio of *population* might be preferable. If so, it is open to discussion; and if, upon discussion, that ratio is deemed best, it will prevail. I wish to be distinctly understood, that if the main principle and benefit contemplated by the bill is established, it is not my purpose or wish to adhere pertinaciously to the exact provisions of the bill on this point, or on any other, or to refuse my vote to any fair modification. Whatever qualifications consistent with the spirit and efficacy of the measure, may be found expedient by the expressed sense of the House, after due deliberation, shall have my cheerful acquiescence. And from the effect of this remark I would not exclude the Second Section, which provides that each Town, before receiving its proportion, is to raise a sum equal to—I should say the sum—which it is entitled to, as its proportion of the appropriation. A difference of opinion exists as to the amount so to be raised by the towns; and half the above sum has been named. This also is open to discussion, in settling the details of the bill. But I would here suggest that it is certainly an object to provide as much as \$20,000 annually. Upon \$20,000 apportioned according to the estimate, the smallest Towns in the State would have \$116.

The treasury could not probably spare \$20,000 a year, without resorting to other modes of supplying it than those that have of late sufficed. And of all modes of directly raising money, none are so satisfactory as that by which the freemen of each Town, by themselves and their own officers under their own inspection and at their own times, raise what is wanted for their own use and benefit. Raising part of the fund directly from themselves, they would feel a direct interest in seeing to its careful application, and I think we should be mistaken if we should suppose that the freemen of most of the Towns in the State are not, at this time, prepared, willingly and cheerfully to raise their proportions, for the objects of this bill. By a provision in connexion with this, the Towns that neglect to raise their proportion, do not thereby lose their right to partake of the fund, except for each year of the neglect. Their proportions are to be added to the fund for distribution the next year, and they can at any time come in and partake. The succeeding Sections provide for the appointment of School committees, and their powers and duties;

and for the mode in which the Treasurer is to keep his accounts of the revenues appropriated, and report and publish each Town's annual proportion.

The last Section provides for an appropriation of a sum certain, out of the money now in the treasury, to be invested in productive Stock, for the commencement and formation of a permanent School Fund, allowing only so much of the interest to be used as may be required in case of a deficiency in the sum for annual distribution. The object of this is to form a nucleus upon which future appropriations and donations accruing, may accumulate and be preserved inviolate for the purposes of Public Education.

These being the principal features of the bill before you, I now move, Sir, that we proceed to consider it Section by Section. And I sincerely hope and trust that we shall proceed in the spirit of conciliation, and mutual concession, without embarrassment and with united purpose, to adopt the main principle of the bill; to make it conform to our best views of prudence and utility; and at all events, before we leave it, before we separate, now, in our day and opportunity, to discharge our duty to the Republic in this particular, and make an effectual provision for the education of our youth, which may be felt in its salutary effects upon this and each succeeding generation.

A substitute for the bill of the Committee was proposed by Mr. Waterman, of Warwick, in which provision was made for a permanent and accumulating fund, and the establishment of schools was postponed until the increase of the fund was large enough to support them without subjecting the people to taxation in their behalf. A similar plan was afterwards presented by Governor Fenner, in the Senate. It was feared that the landholders would not acquiesce in the imposition of a tax. To this argument Mr Tillinghast replied:—

The gentleman asks us if we believe that the people, and especially the landholders, will consent to make it good. Sir, this is speaking as if the people, and especially the landholders, were a class of persons who are to receive no benefit from this measure, and had no interest in it, on their own account. Are they supposed incapable of perceiving that it is a general benefit, of which each class will partake as largely as any other? Or are the cultivators of the soil supposed to be willing that Education and information, and the means of advancement in life, shall be excluded from them and from their children, and confined to persons engaged in other pursuits? But, independently of all moral benefits, and upon mere consideration of property, does not every landholder know that the value of his land is increased by the Education of youth, and the enlightened, moral and well informed condition of the community growing up around him—that his farm is more valuable if situated in an orderly, well instructed and enterprising neighborhood, than if less fortunately located? In another view, it has been stated by an intelligent and leading Manufacturer, that the very water-power of Rhode-Island, was, to a known extent, less valuable than that in the contiguous States, for want of a provision for schools which these States enjoy. The price of schooling is felt in the wages of the families employed. It would be vain to attempt to enumerate or describe the various channels by which benefits are constantly flowing to and through and over a community, from fountains of instruction widely opened and liberally maintained.

This appeal to the landholders, the landed interest, is often resorted to for other purposes than their interests. I know it is a catching argument. But the landholders of this State are too magnanimous, and too intelligent to be borne away by the drift of such an appeal on this subject. They are watchful and cautious, as they should be in regard to expenditure. But for a good purpose, for a valuable object, they are willing to do whatever justice and the occasion may require. They are as capable as others of estimating the returns which an expenditure for this object will

make. And, Sir, let me say, and I appeal to their own hearts for its truth, they have strong attachments—they have deep and kindly feelings—they love their children, and are willing to do as much as others for their present and future good. If the landholders in this House shall adopt the principles of this bill as reasonable, what right will any one have to say that other landholders cannot see reason as well as they? But thus it is. When we are in the Assembly we hear it said, “the people will not consent;” and when we are among the people, we hear it echoed “the Assembly will not act.” I am somewhat acquainted with the sentiments of the people on this subject, in various parts of the State. I have conversed with many of all occupations, and I believe that the people are ready to do their part, if the Assembly will do theirs.

Reference is repeatedly made to the sense of the people. Sir, we should respect the sense of the people. But much do they mistake the feelings and views of the people of this State, who suppose them adverse to a present and effectual provision for Education. If it were so, it would be our duty to endeavor to convince them of better things. And every legislator, after all, will find that the surest way to satisfy his constituents is, upon a careful survey of the premises on which he acts, to act satisfactorily to his own conscientious judgment. His example, as well as his act, will thus be salutary, and stands the best chance of being acceptable—and if not, he has provided for himself a support and consolation of which nothing can deprive him.

Mr. Dixon, of Westerly, appears from this Report to have been one of the most earnest advocates for immediate action on the subject.

If, Sir, there is any public utility to be derived from Free Schools, and we now have the means of providing for that measure, why not do it at once? We have the means of commencing them upon a reasonable though limited scale I admit, and I ask who can doubt their utility? None who have seen their beneficial results.—

What greater benefit can be conferred on a community, and especially the youth of that community, than a general diffusion of the first rudiments of science; it is the great corrective by which society is reformed. Who are there in this State who are opposed to its being done in some degree at public expense? Whatever is of public good is generally conducive to private benefit. The gentleman from Warwick says the farming interest, the landholders, will not approve of it. But I believe every class who comprehend its principles and see its benefits, will approve of it. Those who are conversant with the different classes of the community in the State—and the State is so small that most of us are acquainted with all the different interests it combines—must be thoroughly convinced from their own observation, of the great importance of the measure in contemplation. Is it not all important for this State to retain its population? And what will more conduce to that end than the establishment of such institutions as will afford its population the same benefits that they can derive in other States. The Towns of Providence and Newport, for instance, will retain their population, because their own wisdom and liberality have lead them to establish free schools—in the benefits of which all classes may participate. But the mechanics in the country are constantly removing to those Towns, or to other States, that they may be able to school their children. Are not also the laborers at your manufacturing establishments, leaving them and going into States where the common branches of learning are more accessible, and is not the provisions of some consequence to those manufacturing establishments, which so greatly contribute to the present prosperity and distinction of the State. Not only, Sir, does the country part of the State lose its mechanics, and the Manufacturers their laborers, but, Sir, the small farmers in the country who are not able to send their children abroad, are selling their small farms and removing into States where schools are established by law and where they may educate their children in the common branches of learning, at home. Are those the farmers whom the gentleman from Warwick says, are opposed to supporting schools at public expense? I should think that class would rejoice in the establishment of public schools.

But I ask, Sir, why any landholder should be opposed to this measure? Let

his estate be ever so extensive, his possessions may leave him, his lands may pass from under him, and his money and his bank stock may take to itself wings and fly away. Wealth is transitory, and extremely so in this country. The descendants of the present rich may sooner or later become the future poor. Let every rich man then, who contributes to the establishment of free schools, consider that he is bequeathing a legacy, and the richest one in the gift of man, to his children, his grand children and to his great grand children.

It is among the great objects of establishing schools by law, that the first rudiments of learning may be generally diffused among the lower classes of the community; that the children of the poor may commence in school exercises while young; and as soon as they are old enough to go to school, they will then, either from taste or habit, progress, and those who have talents will soon display their gifts; but if they are neglected until they have arrived to riper years—they are deterred from entering on the first lessons in education, either from shame or aversion, or from habitual negligence, and of course grow up in ignorance.

Wherever you extend the light of science, talent is developed—extend the means of education even to those in the mire and darkness of obscurity, and you will bring forth genius and enterprise—boys in the lowest conditions in life, and who perform servile offices, may have high and exalted capacities, and with the aid of education, may become distinguished in the departments of church and State. They may, Sir, in some future day, when talents are most wanted, command your ships in triumph on the ocean, or lead your armies to victory.

Mr. Potter, of South Kingstown, remarked—

I am sincerely in favor of establishing schools. I want to carry it into effect. I know how beneficial Free Schools have been to this Town, (Providence.) The houses here rent for 50 per cent more, than they would if there were no public schools. A mechanic can afford to pay it, because he more than saves it in educating his children. It is owing to this that the town of Providence has been getting away the population from the rest of the State.

The Bill was opposed on its own merits, principally by Mr. Bull, and Mr. Hazard, of Newport.

Mr. Cranston of Newport—I am not surprised at all, Sir, at the strenuous opposition of my worthy colleagues, (Messrs Hazard and Bull,) to giving the towns a discretionary power. The gentlemen will excuse me if I disclose the secret of this opposition, and leave the House to judge of the motive. Two or three years ago, the town of Newport saw the necessity of establishing Free schools. Seven-eighths of the town were decidedly in favor of the measure, but unfortunately these two able gentlemen who are about equal to the other eighth, opposed it. They were very learned in the law, as to the right of the town to levy a tax for the support of schools, and I listened to their arguments until I became almost convinced the town had no such right. Petitions and applications were made to the General Assembly by both parties. We had five or six town meetings on the subject, and always carried every vote, and although seven-eighths of the freemen were in favor of schools, and these two gentlemen opposed, they had the monstrous power to beat us, and compel us to take up with such a provision as they chose the General Assembly should grant us.—Having been so far gratified, I really do hope they will now have the goodness to give way a little and allow the House to pass an act in favor of Free Schools without their interference. They are not afraid of the taxes in the other towns. All they are alarmed about is the town of Newport.

The Bill after an able and protracted discussion, passed by a vote of 57 in the affirmative, and 2 in the negative. The debate in the Senate is not reported at any length. The Bill passed that body with a few amendments, without a dissenting voice. The amendments were concurred in by the House, and the foundation was thus laid for the present School System of Rhode Island.



## CONDITION OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN 1832.

The following extracts are taken from a Pamphlet printed in 1832, entitled "*The Report of a Committee on the subject of Schools, with a Table shewing the number of Schools in Rhode-Island, the sums expended for their support, and the number of scholars taught in them. Submitted May 17, 1832.*"

The committee was appointed at a meeting of gentlemen interested in the cause of education, which was held in the Town House in May, 1831, and of which President Wayland was Chairman. The Report, we learn, was prepared by Oliver Angell, a veteran Rhode-Island teacher.

"The law establishing Public Schools in this State, is of recent date. It cannot, therefore, be expected that your committee will be able to state any facts shewing the comparative increase of information farther than may be deduced from the increased number of schools. Your committee perceive, both from the reports which they have received from the several towns and from personal observation, that the system of Public Schools has not yet acquired that stability and uniformity which it undoubtedly will attain, after a little more experience and a more general interchange of opinions and feelings on the subject of education, between the intelligent and influential citizens of the different towns. If some regular plan could be devised by which this mutual interchange of views on this important subject might be promoted, your committee think it would greatly facilitate the progress of education through the State.

We find that in some of the districts there are not yet convenient houses or rooms provided for the accommodation of the Schools, but this deficiency will probably soon be supplied. Considerable difficulty has also been experienced in some towns in the location of School-Houses so as to meet the convenience of the inhabitants. When the deficiency in School-Houses shall be remedied, the difficulties attending their location removed, and a regular and systematic plan established in every town, the benefits resulting to the community from this best of all establishments of our State, will become more obvious."

The Report discusses very ably the qualifications of teachers, and the studies, and methods of instruction and discipline to be introduced into Public Schools.

"Upon a review of the subject, your committee find much cause for congratulation in the increased and increasing means of education in the State. There is not a town in which *all* the children may not have the means of acquiring a common school education, and when we consider the nature of our institutions, and how much their preservation depends on the general spread of information, and on the correct morals of our youth, we have much cause to rejoice at the present favorable prospects, and we look forward to the period when Rhode-Island shall be as celebrated for the facilities afforded to education, as she now is for her industry and manufactures."

The following table and summary is annexed to the Report, which we publish as one of the land-marks by which to measure the progress which has been made in public instruction in Rhode-Island.

Towns.	Pub. Schools	No. Scholars	M Teachers employed.	Female do. do.	Appropriated by the Town	Priv. Schools	No. Scholars	M. Teachers.	Female do.
			Months.	Months.	\$			Months.	Months.
Providence,	11	1150	6s 12	5s 12	5000	56	1682	14s 12	42s 12
N. Providence,	8	400	3	3	574	10	300	12	12
Smithfield,	24	2049	3	3	600				
Cumberland,	17	1200	2	2	500	17	1000	2	2
Barrillville,	16	800	2 1-2	4	300	16	500		2
Glocester,	17	510	3	4	550	17	400		4
Scituate,	16	680	3 1-2		300	20	550		4
Foster,	19	1197	3	3					
Johnston,	11	400	3	3	366				
Cranston,	11	550	3 1-2		500				
Bristol,	3	275 4	& 12	6	500	11	240	12	12
Warren,	4	230 3	& 12	3 & 12	350	9	200	1 for 12	8 for 3m
Barrington,	3	113	3	3					
Warwick,	13	1040	4		500				
Coventry,	18	900	4		300				
East Greenwich,	5	250	3		100	3	80	1 for 12	12
W. Greenwich,	11	300	3		5	5	100		3
Newport,	2	400	12	12	800	32	900	12	12
Tiverton,	12	600	2	2		20	400	1	2
Portsmouth,	8	360	2			3	60		2
Little Compton,	7	245	1			7	175	2	4
New Shoreham,	3	100	2						
Middletown,	5	210	4			5	155	3	3
Jamestown,	2	100	3						
N. Kingstown,	12	550	2 3-4	3		8	250		4
S. Kingstown,	12	360	2			4	200	12	
Exeter,	13	390	2 3-4						
Westerly,	11	400	3 1-2		150	8	250		4
Hopkinton,	12	550	3 1-2		100	9	225		4
Richmond,	9	225	3			5	100		3
Charlestown,	8	500	3			4	80		3
Total,	323	17034	318	147	11490	269	7847	83	186

Whole number of Public Schools in the State,	-	-	-	-	323
Whole number of Scholars taught in them,	-	-	-	-	17034
Number of Male Teachers employed,	-	-	-	-	228
Number of Female Teachers employed,	-	-	-	-	147
Number of Schools continued through the year,	-	-	-	-	20
Average time of the others,	-	-	-	-	3 months
Whole amount appropriated by the towns for the support of Schools,	-	-	-	-	\$11490
Amount drawn from School Fund,	-	-	-	-	\$10000
Whole amount expended for support of Public Schools,	-	-	-	-	\$21490
Number of Private Schools continued through the year,	-	-	-	-	
Whole number of Scholars taught in them, (exclusive of the Friends' Boarding School, Providence,†)	-	-	-	-	3403
					Male Teachers, 30
					Female do. 88

*Annual Abstract of the School Returns from 1839 to 1844.* 51

Estimated expense of the Private Schools which con-		
tinue through the year, at twenty dollars per scholar, }	-	68040
Estimated expense of other Private Schools, at \$3 per scholar,	-	13335
Total estimated expense of Private Schools,	-	81375
Sum total expended for support of Schools for one year,	-	102865

\*In nearly all the country towns, the Private Schools may be considered as the Public Schools continued by individual subscription, from three to six months.

†This flourishing institution contains on an average, 160 scholars.

ANNUAL ABSTRACT OF THE SCHOOL RETURNS FROM 1839 TO 1844.

In 1838, the School committee of the several towns were required for the first time, to make annually to the Secretary of State a Return, showing the condition of the Public Schools in certain particulars. Of these Returns, the Secretary was required to make an Abstract, and submit the same to the General Assembly in May of each year. As a part of the history of Public Schools in Rhode-Island, we copy from a Schedule the Abstracts for 1839, and 1844, and a Summary of the Returns for several years, in a few important particulars.

The following communication to the General Assembly, accompanied the Abstract for 1839.

"The Secretary herewith presents the Abstract of the Returns of the Public Schools required by law.

"This being the first year the Returns have been made, it could not be expected they would be so uniform and correct as they probably will be hereafter. It is to be hoped that the Returns to be made next year under the amended law, will give a correct statistical account of the state of education among us, not only in the Public Schools but in our Academies and Private Schools, and will show that we are not far behind our sister States in our zeal for the cause of education.

"In some of the towns it appears that money has been raised by a town tax to support schools. In others the fuel and board of the instructor have been paid for by the voluntary contribution of the inhabitants, and no account kept of it,

"For this reason the Returns do not always state the salaries of teachers correctly, as in many cases they are boarded by the districts in addition to their stated money pay.

"Providence, Newport and Bristol, have long been provided with convenient Public School-houses, and special acts have been passed for building them by taxation in the towns of Richmond, Charlestown, Hopkinton, Exeter, Westerly, Smithfield, E. Greenwich and Cumberland. Most of the other towns have buildings erected by subscription, devoted entirely to this use, but not sufficient in number to accommodate all the Schools.

"The list of books used in our Schools is very important, and from the consideration of it many alterations and improvements will probably

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be suggested in the selection of them. The great variety of the books used in the Schools is much to be deprecated.

"The experience derived from the Returns of the present year will be of great value in preparing the forms which will be distributed the next year, and ensure greater completeness and accuracy in the next Abstract."

### ABSTRACT OF RETURNS OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS, MAY, 1839.

TOWNS.	Proportion of \$25000 which each town will receive, June, 1839.	Amount raised by Towns.	No. of schools.			Expended for fuel, furniture, rent, repairs, &c.	Expended for instruction.	No. of Scholars.	
			No. districts.	No. of schools.	No. instructors.			Agg.	Aver.
Newport,	1739 52	800 00	1	2	2	295 20	1025 00	265	215
Providence,	3818 20	7000 00	5	15	34	535 51	8426 90	1753	1753
Portsmouth,	440 53		8	8	8		487 69	245	225
Westerly,	499 45		11	12	12		598 68	473	385
Warwick,	1454 50	400 00	14	14	12	178 67	1082 42	746	746
N. Shoreham,	359 00	84 00	4	4	4	21 00	394 43	190	200
N. Kingstown,	827 62		14	16	16	124 17	792 05	479	421
S. Kingstown,	1042 75		18	18	18	94 67	1059 71	645	645
E. Greenwich,	389 15		5	5	5	44 50	386 30	209	189
Jamestown,	80 15		1	3	3	14 00	159 00	53	53
Smithfield,	1738 85	1000 00	25	30	30		2511 56	1206	960
Scituate,	1048 92	300 00	16	16	16		1472 00	734	577
Glocester,	690 60	627 34	18	16	20	87 54	858 95	384	384
Charlestown,	359 00		8	8	8		379 85	246	246
W. Greenwich,	530 28		12	15	16	15 00	572 00	253	227
Coventry,	1059 20		19	19	19		1172 30	470	470
Exeter,	685 80		13	13	13	28 40	479 65	284	284
Middletown,	282 80		1	5	5	50 00	490 88	200	200
Bristol,	790 62		3	5	10	297 52	1367 50	320	320
Tiverton,	787 90		15	17	21	135 12	637 11	349	310
L. Compton,	359 00		7	7	13	7 43	390 00	530	227
Warren,	403 52	360 00	3	3	3	127 87	445 09	132	109
Cumberland,	970 83	500 00	19	19	22		1594 42	412	432
Richmond,	413 80		12	10	10		458 00	219	182
Cranston,	680 33	500 00	9	13	13	501 03	606 82	407	407
Hopkinton,	481 65		12	12	12		689 26	478	337
Johnston,	604 95	350 00	11	12	15	113 47	718 47	333	333
N. Providence,	864 62	260 00	8	10	13	124 08	1091 30	463	388
Barrington,	160 31	93 75	3	3	3	100 70	170 10	194	143
Foster,	821 45		19	19	19		938 22	619	431
Burrillville,	644 70	300 00	16	16	32	75 62	927 70	446	447
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25000 00/1257509/330 365 427 2 971 50/32 383 36/13748/12246									

### SUMMARY OF THE SEVERAL RETURNS FOR 1839 TO 1844.

Year,	Scholars.		Expended for	
	Male.	Female.	Fuel & inc'd'l.	Instruction.
1839.	8 112.	5 636.	\$2 971 50.	\$32 383 36.
1840.	10 202.	7 550.	4 103 80.	36 095 98.
1841.	11 253.	9 000.	6 312 64.	40 516 01.
1842.	12 479.	9 372.	5 482 00.	39 088 43.
1843.	11 960.	8 132.	5 898 55.	42 944 29.
1844.	11 811.	10 345.	5 405 47.	48 335 76.



ABSTRACT OF THE RETURNS OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS, MADE MAY, 1841.

TOWNS.	Received from State.	Received from Town	No. Dist.	No. Schools.	Instructors		Expended for		Scholars.	
					Male	Female	Fuel. Rent.	Instruction.	Agg.	Aver.
Newport,	176659	1600	2	11	5	8	600	3095	690	600
Providence,	505742	1648920	6	26	11	49	257162	18975	4118	3159
Portsmouth,	37442		8	8	6	4	120	1020	282	192
Westerly,	45395	8654	11	14	12	2		53852	531	344
Warwick,	155636	500 00	15	22	18	9	31583	191891	1491	1087
N. Shoreham,	29982		5	9	8		150	29982	232	171
N. Kingstown,	66681	26287	15	20	19	2		92938	514	400
S. Kingstown,	96432	378	21	21	21			113835	822	521
E. Greenwich,	33044	75	5	5	5		1202	39416	283	200
Jamestown,	6633	1632	1	5	7	2		156	94	72
Smithfield,	217523	137093	35	38	20	10	50	3496	2790	1200
Scituate,	96310	51658	17	18	13	5		147968	880	570
Glocester,	55118	400	19	17	13	14	1731	109196	483	332
Charlestown,	25094		8	8	7	1		26504	218	140
W. Greenwich,	33635		12	12	10	2			232	148
Coventry,	81781	18608	18	18	17	1	912	93142	716	427
Exeter,	44673	5007	13	13	12	1		49680	374	225
Middletown,	19839	41	2	5	4	1	35	23939	93	93
Bristol,	81857	1000	3	6	4	3	200 09	153425	444	352
Tiverton,	80443	63937	16	19	14	5		109577	698	434
Little Compton,	32321	4129	9	9	9	9		36450	285	200
Warren,	45789	39675	3	4	3	4	12522	78625	263	134
Cumberland,	116809	98356	20	20	15	14	20080	202575	1090	774
Richmond,	34076	6156	13	12	12		32532	49732	218	200
Cranston,	68126	744	9	12	12		24887	81080	407	332
Hopkinton,	42242		12	12	12			38960	407	251
Johnston,	58995	400	14	14	13	5	13030	85965	592	428
N. Providence,	98282	115921	9	13	5	8	24730	1750	1752	750
Barrington,	12656	100	3	3	3	3	3562	236	128	102
Foster,	62453		19	18	18	3		62453	495	304
Burrillville,	46906	42050	16	16	18	10	1117	89591	503	386
Total,	2509574	279183	359	428	342	173	540547	4833576	22156	14528

DEBATE ON THE SCHOOL ACT OF 1845.

The debate on the Act of 1845, at the June session of the General Assembly in 1844, was reported in the Providence Daily Journal of July of the same year. We republish the report of Mr. Updike's remarks from the Daily Journal of July 3, 1844.

*Mr. Updike.*—*Mr. Speaker,* \* \* \* \* \* There is a wide-spread dissatisfaction with the schools as they are; with the inefficient manner in which the system is administered; with the shortness of time for which the schools are kept—although they are quite long enough unless they can be kept by better teachers; with the amount of money which is now appropriated by the State, without calling forth any corresponding effort and appropriations from the towns and districts; with the want of any suitable regulation as to books and studies; with the defective methods of instruction and the harsh, unnecessarily harsh discipline pursued by many of the schools; in fine, with the entire organization

and administration of the system, as far at least as the great mass of the towns are concerned. True there are good schools in Providence, Bristol, Warren and Newport, and in some of the eastern towns of Providence county, but the returns to the Secretary of State, and the report of your school commissioner will show that the public schools are not kept in the country districts, on an average, three months in the year ; that there are a great variety of text books in every school, and that this variety is made greater every year through the activity of book agents, authors and publishers ; that the school houses are deficient in respect to size, the means of ventilation, and the construction and arrangement of seats and desks ; that the teachers are employed without being examined, and that too many of them are but poorly qualified in respect to moral character, as well as ability to govern and instruct children ; that their teachers come prowling into the State from Connecticut and Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, because they are too well known at home to get employed there, and because we have no system of strict examination and supervision by which their deficiencies might be exposed ; that these teachers, at the close of the schools, march back again—laughing at our credulity—to their homes, to work on the farm or in the shop, till the season comes round for a new expedition for schools into Rhode Island ; and, in fine, that the whole system works badly and inefficiently.

[Mr. Updike, in this part of his speech, gave a ludicrous picture of some of the schools, school houses, teachers and committees, which had come under his knowledge, but which it is impossible to report.]

Such is the state of the schools, and such is the state of the public mind regarding our system. There is a demand from every parent, and every friend of education who has thought at all upon the subject, for something better, and that speedily. Let us take the first great step for the attainment of this object—let us place the organization of the schools on the basis of this bill, and secure the services of an experienced and able officer to superintend its administration. The system will be good for nothing without a head, and your Commissioner can do nothing without the means, the powers, and the agencies provided in this act. The system proposed, though new as a whole, is not untried in its various details. Its chief value consists in its embodying the best features of the best school systems in this country and in Europe, and thus enabling us to profit by the experience of others ; and no one unacquainted with the practical working of these various systems could have arranged, subordinated and condensed the regulations which this experience had shown to be necessary and wise, as they are presented in the measure prepared by our agent of public schools. By it we shall avoid the evils which I have described, and which in a measure destroy the efficiency of the common schools in other States. With this act, the system will have a head, by which the state of the schools will be constantly known, and any improvement in one district or town can be made the common property of every other town and district. Any case of local or individual hardship from the operation of a general rule can be relieved and corrected. Any town or district which is prepared to go forward, will not be kept back by the apathy and narrow policy of other towns or districts. The evils of badly constructed school-houses will be done away with speedily,

by a dissemination of a knowledge of the correct principles and improved plans of school-house architecture. The more extensive employment of female teachers, under the proposed system of primary and secondary schools, wherever it can be adopted, will do away with the evils resulting from a constant change of teachers, and the crowding together of children of all ages and studies, and every degree of proficiency, in the same school. More system will be given to the management and supervision of schools by the permanency given to the office of school committees; and more of local interest by the appointment of trustees by the school districts. Better teachers will be employed. The schools will be kept for a longer time. The best text books will be adopted. More children will be brought into the schools, and a more general and vigorous co-operation of parents and the public will be secured.

I hope, therefore, Mr. Speaker, that this bill will pass, and pass now. If we propose to enjoy the benefits of a system of general, thorough, practical education, we must begin. It is absurd to wait till every town in the State is prepared. We shall wait till dooms-day if we expect to wait till the ignorant come forward to ask for an education for their children, the pleasures and advantages of which they are entirely unconscious of themselves. And it will be a new era in this State, if the towns of Kent and Washington counties come forward and ask for taxation, although I believe they are ready to tax themselves to the amount proposed in this bill, if it be necessary to secure the State appropriation, and it can be shown that this increase of means will in the end be a great saving in the aggregate expenditure for education in any town. Make the public schools good enough for all, and the experience of Providence shows that a liberal expenditure, and intelligent supervision, and good teachers, will make them so, and then the expense of schooling a child properly will be reduced at least one-half, if not three-fourths, to every parent. Why, sir, the absence of good public schools in the country towns makes the tuition of our children in private schools enormous. It is the heaviest item of expense we have, and especially if we are obliged to send them away from home for an education. And then the withdrawal of so many of the children of the wealthy and the intelligent from the public schools because they are so inefficiently managed, helps to make them still worse. We must act liberally and together in this cause. The State must continue to appropriate as large a sum as heretofore for the support of public schools. The towns must do as much, and more; and then, if there is any deficiency in the means, the districts, or the parents who send, must contribute, and thus enable the school committee to employ good teachers. We must elect capable men to the office of school committees, and men of education and wealth must consent to act as committees. These committees must see that none but moral and qualified teachers are employed, and that our young men and young women may qualify themselves to be teachers, let us contribute from our means as individuals to establish and maintain model schools and normal schools. Let us have our Rhode Island Institute of Instruction, which shall meet in different parts of the State, where teachers and the friends of education may come together and discuss the great subjects which concern the improvement of the public schools. Let us go

round into the districts and point out to parents and to our fellow citizens generally existing defects, and all desirable and practical remedies, in the government and management of these schools.

But let us start right. Let us have an organization to begin with, so that our efforts will not be thrown away, and our money squandered as now. Let us have a law by which good schools can be established if we can convince the people that it is their interest to establish them. Let us have a law, by which none but qualified teachers shall be employed, and as far as practicable, Rhode Island teachers, educated in our own schools, sympathizing with us, understanding our ways, and spending their lives and their money in our own borders, may be employed. Let us have a law by which the enormous evil and expense, arising out of a constant change of school books shall be remedied; and all new school-houses erected after judicious plans and directions. Let us have a law by which the public interest shall be kept alive and vigilant, to look after the expenditure of the public money, and see that the results correspond with the outlay. Let us have an officer, whose intelligence, experience and constant oversight, shall give efficiency and uniformity to the administration of the system—who shall go round among the schools, hold meetings of teachers, parents and the friends of education, break up the apathy which prevails in some parts of the State, enlighten the ignorant, and direct the efforts of all to one great and glorious end, the training of all the children, the rich and the poor, in all sound knowledge and worthy practice. Let us have a State pride on this subject. Let us aim to be, what I am sure we can become from our compact population, and the comparative wealth of all our people, the educated and educating State of this Union. Instead of being set down in the census of the United States, as the seventh State in the scale of ignorance, and neglect of public education—instead of having one in forty of our population who cannot read and write—instead of giving occasion for geographers and travellers to say, that Rhode Island is behind every other New England State in the means and results of common school education—instead of all this, let us make an immediate and vigorous effort to reverse the picture. Let us stand at the head of the list, for a wisely organized and efficiently administered system of public instruction. Let us every where, as well in the country districts, as now in the city of Providence, have such schools, school-houses, teachers, and supervision, that we may ourselves be proud of them, and the stranger and sojourner among us, shall be forced to acknowledge our superiority in all these respects to any thing among themselves at home. Let us welcome the twenty-five thousand children now capable of receiving the process of education to the pleasures and advantages of good schools and good books, and on the passing off of the generation now on the stage, let the census of the United States, and above all, let peace in our own borders, the security of property, the dignity and value of labor, the cheerfulness and happiness of every fireside and workshop in the State, proclaim, that there is not a child of suitable age who is not at school, or an inhabitant of the State who cannot read or write, or who has not access to a well selected library of good books.